

# Reminders from God



It's been said that the Lord works in mysterious ways. Scripture is clear on this point, with Isaiah reminding us that "my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways. ... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Is 55:8-9). God's ways are mysterious, but at times he is also very obvious – sometimes over the top – when he wants to make a point. That's why I shouldn't have been surprised by what happened the evening of the 50th anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* ("Of Human Life").

My husband and I were just returning home after speaking at a major conference celebrating 50 years of the diaconate in the United States. Our talk just happened to be on marriage, a topic that played a big part in what Pope Paul VI told the world back in 1968. Due to heavy traffic and endless free-way construction, we decided to take a different route, which took us right by the banquet hall where we had our wedding reception nearly 35 years ago.

The facility is still going strong. It's been remodeled and is so popular that we noticed a brand-new wedding chapel right next door. How convenient. At least for those who are abandoning the idea of a church wedding, which, unfortunately, is happening much more frequently among Catholics. Between 1970 and 2014, the number of Catholic weddings dropped 64 percent.

So of course, being the anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, my husband and I couldn't help but wonder if God was trying to remind us that we need to keep doing what we can to spread the beauty of Church teaching to a world that often treats a wedding more like a social event than a lifelong sacrificial

and sacramental commitment.

Despite our brief discussion in the car, apparently the Lord thought we needed some additional reminders. When we arrived at our favorite local Italian eatery, we ran into another Catholic couple whom we've known for years. The four of us were part of a team back in the late 1990s that taught marriage prep in one of the local parishes.

We exchanged greetings and went to our table, located in the restaurant lounge. Within minutes of getting our glasses of wine, we overheard an engaged couple sitting at the bar going on about all the hoops they had to jump through before getting married in the Church. The bartender, whose own wedding was apparently on the horizon, soon joined in. He was the most animated, complaining that his to-do list was just too jammed-packed to find time for all the Church requirements:

"We have this book we have to read, questions we have to answer and this is every week for six weeks."

My husband and I exchanged glances with our friends a few tables down, both of us shaking our heads. My husband and I also chuckled a bit. There it was again: yet one more reminder from God. Who could ignore that fact that we had just given a presentation on strengthening marriage, seen the brand-new wedding chapel next to the our reception facility, heard the conversation going on behind us and all of this on the anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*?

We had been on somewhat of a spiritual high as we headed to dinner that evening, seeing such great work being done in the diaconate community. But as I thought about what transpired, I realized that God wasn't trying to bring us down. Just the opposite. He was affirming the need to keep on keeping on. Needless to say, we got the hint or, should I say, the spiritual two-by-fours the Lord was sending.

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